



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GLOBAL
CORPORATE SOCIAL IMPACT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA,
AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM

Congressman Lee M. Zeldin
First Congressional District of New York

October 18, 2021

Carol A. Gomes, MS, FACHE, CPHQ
Chief Executive Officer
Stony Brook University Hospital
101 Nicolls Road
Stony Brook, NY 11794

Dear Ms. Gomes,

On August 16, 2021, New York State announced a COVID-19 vaccination mandate for healthcare workers. As part of this mandate, healthcare workers in New York, including staff at hospitals and long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes, adult care and other congregate care settings, were required to have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Monday, September 27.

The Governor's order is one-size-fits-all and does not allow for employees who do not want the COVID vaccine to instead be subjected to enhanced PPE and testing requirements. Our healthcare workers were nothing short of heroic the past 18 months. Regardless of the uncertainty, lack of PPE and other essential resources at times, grueling long hours and pain, suffering, and death around them, they rose to the challenge over and over again. They helped us navigate some of the pandemic's darkest days and saved lives. We shouldn't be firing these essential workers. We should be thanking them for all they've done for our communities.

While Stony Brook Medicine was required to comply with this mandate, I write today because it has been brought to my attention that Stony Brook Medicine is notifying employees that if they chose not to vaccinate themselves against COVID-19 that the Department of Labor Relations will investigate and interrogate them without sufficient advance notice of their required attendance. Additionally, a claim has been brought to my attention that Stony Brook Medicine is terminating employees, who chose not to vaccinate themselves against COVID-19, on the charges of "incompetence", "misconduct", "derelict in your duties", and "insubordination", and that such charges could impact their ability to hold the necessary certifications and licenses and obtain other employment in the State of New York. What is your rationale and your legal authority to be charging employees with "incompetence", "misconduct", "derelict in your duties", and "insubordination"?

As you know, a federal judge ruled that New York cannot impose COVID-19 vaccine mandates without allowing employers to consider religious exemptions. However, it has come to my attention that Stony Brook Medicine is [denying religious exemption requests](#) without any process to appeal. What is your process and rationale for evaluating and rejecting religious exemption requests? Is there any circumstance in which Stony Brook Medicine is granting a religious exemption for the COVID-19 vaccine or is it the position of Stony Brook Medicine to reject all requests for these religious exemptions?

I look forward to your immediate response. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Zeldin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress